

those troops to battle. Reluctant? Yes. But wise? Yes, I want a wise warrior too.

I listened to the Senator from Kentucky criticize the President because he is, quote, telegraphing his punches when it comes to what is going to happen in Syria. Well, you cannot have it both ways. This President could make a unilateral decision and attack without even consulting Congress and thereby maintain the element of surprise or he could do as this President has done and follow what he considers to be our constitutional requirement of a national debate before we engage in military action.

So I would say to the Senator from Kentucky, do not criticize the President for letting us know what he might do when he turns this over to Congress to debate. It is something most of us in Congress should welcome.

I also take exception to this notion that we have somehow abandoned our commitment to the world—this notion that what we hope to do in the Pacific is unreachable, or the closing of embassies because of danger is problematic or that there is austerity in the Department of Defense.

It is hard to reconcile those statements from the Republican side of the aisle with the fact that repeatedly we have asked for a conference committee on the budget to work out our budget differences when it comes to funding the Department of Defense and our Nation's national defense and time and again the Republicans have objected—objected to even sitting down and trying to work out differences so we can restore some of the funds cut through sequestration.

You cannot have it both ways. Do not criticize the President for not spending enough money when it comes to our Nation's defense and then stand by the sequestration which continues to cut even more from that same Department and many others.

As for the war on terror, what the President has said is there comes a moment, and we have reached it, where we cannot always be on a war footing. It causes a nation to make decisions which in the long haul may not stand the test of time and history. The President has said, yes, there is a war on terrorism, but we have to resume our leadership in this world with the view of a stable nation, not always thinking about the wartime status we face.

I listened to the Senator from Kentucky, who talks about saving money and cutting budgets, trying to hang on to that relic of times gone by at Guantanamo, where we are spending so much money—hundreds of thousands of dollars for each prisoner to be kept at Guantanamo—when we know full well that at least half of them should be released—carefully released—and should not be maintained at Guantanamo.

Today, we have hundreds of convicted terrorists safely incarcerated in the Federal penitentiaries of America, including one in Illinois in Marion, and

the people in the nearby community would not even know it because they are safely incarcerated.

Let me say a word too about this issue of Syria. You cannot, on the one hand, criticize this President for stepping up and saying we need to take action, if necessary, to stop the use of chemical weapons and then, on the other hand, say he is a reluctant warrior and that he does not support it. How in the world do you reconcile those two points of view?

The President has shown leadership. What he has asked is for the Congress to follow. What I heard from the Republican Senator from Kentucky is he is not interested in following that leadership.

Let me also add, this Putin overture, that we find some peaceful way to resolve this—I hope it turns out to be true and something that works. And if it does, give credit where it is due. This President stepped up and said we have to challenge the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Even if it does not affect the United States directly or its allies directly, we have to stand up to them. And if this Putin overture leads to some containment or destruction of those chemical weapons, give the President credit for it. Do not criticize him for not leading. He has shown more leadership on this issue than, frankly, many politicians of either party wanted to face.

I think when it comes to a credible strategy, this President has one.

It is a strategy which is ending two wars, which has put an end to the leader of that terrible terrorist attack on the United States on 9/11. It is a strategy which has improved the image of the United States since this President has come to power over the last several years. It is a strategy we can build on in the future. But we need to make certain that what we do is done with an eye toward the reality of this world in which we live. It is a dangerous world. It is one where the United States may be called on to lead at times when we do not want to lead. We cannot be isolationist. The United States has a responsibility in this world. That responsibility has to be used very carefully. This President understands that.

I hope that at the end of the day we can, in fact, see a peaceful resolution of the chemical weapons issue in Syria. I hope we can find a way to harken back to Ronald Reagan where we can trust that will happen but verify it as well. That would be the right ending. I think the President has taken the right position.

I would like to add something. When it comes to the nation of Israel, our closest and best ally in the Middle East, they understand what we are trying to do with chemical weapons in Syria. They have made it clear through their friends in the United States and other ways that they support it without fear of retaliation by Syria. They are ready, according to Prime Minister Netanyahu, for whatever Syria chooses

to do. We should not be any less forceful or less committed when it comes to ending the threat of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and that following my remarks Senator PORTMAN be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SYRIA

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I know that—and what we have heard this morning—what is rightfully at the forefront of all of our minds this week is the debate about whether to authorize the use of force in Syria. This is a very serious matter, as we all know. It raises a number of geopolitical and national security issues.

The decision to undertake military action is not one to be taken lightly. I am very aware that people are war-weary, that they are concerned about the consequences of the use of military force. Consequently, I believe we should pursue every possible diplomatic solution prior to engaging in military action.

I welcome the possibility of international cooperation to secure and destroy Syria's chemical weapons stockpile. I hope that Russia is being serious and that they will take real, legitimate actions to quickly follow through on what they have raised with their effort to try to encourage Assad to give up his chemical weapons to international control. I am working with some of my colleagues on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on an amendment to the resolution that would incorporate this new development and pressure the Syrians to ensure that we see credible concrete steps in any possible effort to place their chemical weapons under international inspection. I look forward to hearing from the President today and this evening, and I look forward to the debate later this week as we consider the situation in Syria.

#### ENERGY SAVINGS AND INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS ACT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes this morning to talk about legislation that was previously scheduled to be debated on the Senate floor this week—the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act, also known as Shaheen-Portman. I know the Presiding Officer has been very involved in energy issues for all of his time in public life, and I do appreciate the work he did as a Member of the House. I know he is following this debate very closely. I appreciate that.

This bill is one Senator ROB PORTMAN and I have been working on for 3 years.